NOVA SCOTIA
Human Rights Commission

NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF MANDATE (March 30, 2013)

2013-2014

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1. Message from the Minister and the Director and CEO

We are pleased to present the 2013-2014 Statement of Mandate for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (NSHRC). This plan sets out the NSHRC's strategic direction for the fiscal year.

The NSHRC's vision is to help build inclusive communities and to protect and promote human rights in Nova Scotia. An effective relationship with both government and the public will enable the NSHRC to fulfil its dual mandate: human rights dispute resolution, and eliminating barriers to full participation in society through education, training and consultation, including policy advice.

In the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the NSHRC will continue to enhance its dispute resolution process. Beginning January 1, 2012, changes were made to the way the NSHRC addressed conflict resolution by improving efficiency and adopting restorative approaches. Positive results from these changes are being experienced by the people who engage in the process, including dramatically improved timeliness, flexibility and transparency, all of which benefit all Nova Scotians. The NSHRC continues to advance this work, and has been recognized as a leader in the field of restorative approaches as they relate to human rights.

The NSHRC is also in the process of adapting its restorative approaches, in appropriate circumstances, to boards of inquiry. It is anticipated that this will also improve efficiencies and dramatically reduce costs to all parties involved, as well as to government.

The NSHRC proudly worked in conjunction with the Department of Justice and the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage in the fall of 2012 to bring about amendments to the *Human Rights Act* to specifically recognize the rights of transgender individuals both with respect to gender identity and gender expression. The NSHRC will continue work in this area in 2013-2014 by providing education to the public regarding this issue.

The NSHRC recognizes the importance of preventing discrimination of any nature. It continues to promote and provide human rights education and training by identifying issues and providing information, education and training on all aspects of human rights. Building on an extensive research project conducted in 2012, the NSHRC will be releasing a major report concerning the topic of consumer racial profiling within the next two months. It is expected that this work will assist in addressing the issue of discrimination that occurs in the context of consumer transactions.

Education is the pivotal method of battling discrimination. Human rights education needs to start with our early learners. The NSHRC is pleased to advise that it will be working in cooperation with the Nova Scotia Department of Education in the coming year to introduce a pilot program of a human rights curriculum in selected schools around the province.

The NSHRC continues to provide ongoing assistance and advice to organizations and business by exploring diversity in the workplace, providing education and assisting in the prevention of discriminatory practices. The NSHRC believes that inclusiveness improves the general health and wellbeing as well as the economic prospects of all Nova Scotians.

The NSHRC will continue to make the best possible use of its human and financial resources in support of government's priority of getting back to balance and living within our means.

The NSHRC is a dynamic organization proud of its leadership role in the protection and promotion of human rights. We are committed to working with all Nova Scotians to assist them to participate in and contribute to a vibrant, prosperous and diverse community.

Honourable Ross Landry
Minister Responsible for the
Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*

David Shannon
Director and CEO
Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

2. Mandate

The NSHRC has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency charged with administering the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, a provincial statute created in 1969, with the most recent amendments in December, 2012. The NSHRC is mandated by the Act to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The specific duties of the NSHRC are set out in the Act as follows:

- Administer and enforce the provisions of this Act;
- Develop a program of public information and education in the field of human rights to forward the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religion, creed, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender or sexual orientation;
- Conduct research and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights;
- Advise and assist government departments and co-ordinate their activities as far as these activities concern human rights;
- Advise the government on suggestions, recommendations and requests made by private organizations and individuals;
- Cooperate with and assist any person, organization or body concerned with human rights, inside or outside the province;
- Report as required by the Minister on the business and activities of the Commission;
- Consider, investigate or administer any matter or activity referred to the Commission by the Governor in Council or the Minister.

Vision

The NSHRC is committed to actively engage and work with all Nova Scotians and our diverse communities to effectively:

- Advance equity and dignity,
- Foster positive and respectful relations, and
- Protect human rights.

The NSHRC believes in and is committed to:

- Restorative processes
- Respectful and productive relationships
- Inclusivity
- Service excellence
- Continuous learning through research and innovation
- Transparency

Strategic Goals

Beginning last year, the NSHRC defined its strategic goals for the ensuing three years. They are as follows:

1. **Identify, Address and Operationalize Priority Human Rights Issues**

   The NSHRC will:

   a. Outline a process and criteria for identifying priorities, identify the most important/strategic human rights issues in order to guide the Commission in its work and gain agreement to proceed from the Commissioners;

   b. Develop a framework for addressing issues that mitigates all potential for harm and develops restorative responses;

   c. Implement systems and structures and put resources in place to address priority issues, and furthermore, support community capacity to address these issues;

   d. Strengthen its capability to respond quickly to critical community situations independent of the Commission's complaint process.

2. **Fully Integrate Restorative Approaches Into the Commission's Work**

   The NSHRC will:

   a. Implement a new dispute resolution process and take advantage of the opportunities it provides to strengthen communication, build awareness and raise the profile of the Commission and its restorative approaches;

   b. Fully incorporate restorative processes into all we do by developing a menu of restorative processes, and use consistent principles, approaches and experiences.

3. **Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices**

   The NSHRC will:

   a. Profile and build upon advancements in human rights work through such strategies as contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues and, in particular, assess and report on our experience with the new dispute resolution process, and furthermore, prepare to capitalize

on the 50-year anniversary of the Commission (2017);

b. Strengthen government and media relations;

c. Encourage the adoption of best human rights practices by adopting the following strategies:
   i. Strengthen connections with all stakeholders such as professionals, volunteers, communities, businesses and organizations involved in human rights work in order to foster a stronger vision, exchange effective approaches and develop new ideas;
   ii. Provide tools, resources, and potentially on-line training, including restorative training for Boards of Inquiry;
   iii. Contribute to a stronger national partnership of commissions, particularly those commissions that are sized similarly to that of Nova Scotia;

d. Enhance mechanisms to give a voice to people with protected characteristics;

e. Develop and implement a communications strategy.

3. Government Priorities (as appropriate for an independent agency)

Although it is an independent agency with a clearly defined statutory mandate, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission helps the government to achieve its priorities in the following ways:

Priority 1 - Get back to balance and ensure government lives within its means

The Commission will make the most effective use of its financial and human resources. The Commission's streamlined dispute resolution processes will allow respondents, including government departments and agencies, to efficiently participate in resolution activities.

Priority 2 - Make health care better for you and your family

Having now adopted its new dispute resolution processes, the Commission has established a proven track record of improved resolution human rights issues. More timely resolution of outstanding human rights issues has allowed participants to address their issues and move on with their lives. The Commission will also help to ensure healthcare services are provided fairly and equitably, without regard to personal characteristics of the patient. The NSHRC will also promote respect for human rights in the workplaces of healthcare workers so that better health care can be delivered to patients. A community that promotes the dignity, participation and rich diversity of all members is a healthy community. It is the mandate of the NSHRC to fulfill this goal in order in order to enhance the wellness of all Nova Scotians.

Priority 3 - Make Life More Affordable and Break the Cycle of Poverty

Unfortunately, poverty tends to be associated with the same persons who most need protection and promotion of their human rights. It is the mandate of the NSHRC to ensure that all Nova Scotians are entitled to inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights. The NSHRC has always strived to ensure that all citizens of our province are treated equally, free of discrimination and injustice, and will continue to do so in the future. The NSHRC recognizes that a barrier-free life for our citizens is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Priority 4 - Create good jobs and grow the economy

Nearly 80 percent of Commission dispute resolution efforts are related to employment. The Commission will continue to work towards fostering employer/employee relations and achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce across Nova Scotia, which means a larger, more qualified workforce pool. Eliminating discrimination will allow individuals and groups who are historically underrepresented in the workforce to achieve gainful

employment and be properly represented.

Respect for human rights creates a better workplace culture, creating more productive employees, which in turn generates economic growth.

4. Performance Measures

Address Priority Human Rights Issues					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year 2011-2012**	**TARGET March 2014**	**TRENDS**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Priority human rights issues have been identified, approval obtained from Commissioners and priorities operationalized	Report created identifying all priority issues	Statement of Mandate prepared March 30, 2012 and bi-monthly reports created for Commiss-ioners	Statement of Mandate prepared March 30, 2013 and bi-monthly reports created for Commiss-ioners	N/A	Continue to prepare Statements of Mandate and bi-monthly progress report to Commissioners that identifies current priority human rights issues and implementation time lines
	Reports tabled for Commissioners and approval obtained	N/A	Every 2 months	Every 2 months	Report to Commissioners and seek approval

	Status update with respect to each priority identified	N/A	Every 2 months	Every 2 months	• Continue to assign managers and staff to each priority as action items following each Commission meeting • Continue to identify appropriate partners and stakeholders for each priority
Integrate Restorative Approaches					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year 2009-2010**	**TARGET 2013- 2014**	**TRENDS**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Strengthen communication, build awareness and raise the profile of the Commission and its restorative approaches	Communi-cation Report created identifying and building on prior communication initiatives	Communi-cation Report prepared March 30, 2010	Updated Communica tion Report prepared by June 30, 2013	N/A	• Identify each of the Commission's strategic priorities • Develop procedures to ensure that major dispute resolution initiatives carry with them a communications component that highlight the restorative/collaborative processes both internally and at Boards of Inquiry

	Report tabled for Commiss-ioners and approval obtained	N/A	September 18, 2013	N/A	Report to Commissioners and seek approval
	Status update with respect to each communication initiative	N/A	June 1, 2013	N/A	Assign managers and staff to each communication initiative
Fully incorporate restorative processes where appropriate	All three business units demonstrate application of restorative processes	N/A	September 18, 2013	N/A	• Dispute Resolution unit completes evaluation of i3 programme • RREI unit completes research on restorative activities • Legal unit completes restorative training of Commissioners and board chairs

Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices					
OUTCOME	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year 2011-2012**	**TARGET 2013-22014**	**TRENDS**	**STRATEGIC ACTIONS**
Position NSHRC at the cutting edge of best human rights practices	Complete restorative training to Commissioners and BOI chairs and report on new advancements created or adopted by NSHRC	N/A	100% of Comm-issioners and BOI chairs trained by December 31, 2013		• Share/receive information regarding best practices with other commissions and BOI chairs • Seek amendments to the NS *Human Rights Act* to support restorative processes • Capture innovative Commission work via polling, academic papers and conferences
Position NSHRC as a national role model in human rights practices	Host 2013 national CASHRA conference May 29, 30 & 31, 2013 in Halifax, NS	N/A	Conference to be held May 29-31, 2013	N/A	• Create a planning committee • Operationalize plans and host conference • Work with other human rights agencies, governmental agencies, NGO's and academics to enhance human rights dialogue
Enhanced communication activities	Complete updated communication strategy	N/A	6 mos.	N/A	• Implement updated communications plan

5. Budget Context and Budget

Budget

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission			
	2011-2012 Estimate ($ thousands)	2011-2012 Forecast ($ thousands)	2012-2013 Estimate ($ thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:	2,143	2,143	2,449
FTE's	23.8	22.1	23.5